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Environment, Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Departments Pleased with Senator's Decision on SB 473

(Santa Fe, NM) — The Cabinet Secretaries of the New Mexico Environment (NMED) and Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources (ENMRD) Departments today expressed their pleasure with Senator Ben Altamirano's stated intention not to further pursue passage of his Bill 473. This bill sought to establish "Mining Districts" in the state where environmental oversight would have been severely restricted.

"I have no interest in pursuing this bill any further at this time," said Sen. Altamirano. "After listening to the departments' input and hearing about their efforts to work with the mining industry, I have decided that the Mining Act is best left as is."

"We appreciate Senator Altamirano's willingness to listen to our department's concerns with this bill," said Environment Secretary Ron Curry. "We are very happy with his decision and look forward to working with the Senator and the citizens of Grant County in the future."

"Senator Altamirano's sensitivity to the public interests affected by his bill should be applauded," said Joanna Prukop, EMNRD Secretary. "As a result of his decision, the state's Mining Act will remain the cornerstone of New Mexico's commitment to protect our citizens by effectively reclaiming mining facilities."

Senate Bill 473, sponsored by Sen. Altamirano, sought to establish "Mining Districts", under the New Mexico Mining Act within which the State's ability to ensure protection of its natural resources (air and water quality, erosion reduction, habitat protection, etc.) would have been severely curtailed. SB 473 would have allowed contamination of surface and ground water within mine sites – at a time when water resources have never been more threatened – and would have allowed huge tracts of mine waste to remain as sources of water contamination in perpetuity.

For further information, contact Jon Goldstein, Communications Director, NMED at (505) 827-0314.

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